



ACWS Ltd PO Box 270 Washington,  
Tyne & Wear NE37 9BX

## ***The A.C.W.S. NEWSLETTER***

### **2017 3<sup>rd</sup> Issue**



## **KELHAM PREPARATION 2017**

ACWS is a Member of NAReS

**N·A·Re·S**

**Issue 185**

# **A.C.W.S. CONTACTS**

## **Directors & Army Commanders**

Mr Tim Davies Chairman

Mrs Linda Reed, Secretary

Ian Morris, Treasurer

Mr Peter Holt, Events

Miss Claire Morris, Membership

Mr Martin Cross, Health & Safety

Mrs Val Holt, Communications

Mr Mike Bussey, Webmaster

Mrs Vivienne Corbishley, International Coordinator

Mr Tim Davis, Federal Commander

Mr Glenn Gibson Confederate Commander

## **A Message From The Secretary**

Hi y'all,

I hope this newsletter finds you all well.

What a fabulous season so far, and the best is yet to come! Just a couple of things from myself in this edition guys and gals. Firstly I would like to thank ALL the board of directors and membership for being so supportive. Behind the scenes everyone does such an amazing job.

Kelham Hall is looking to be an amazing event, with a packed schedule and many guests. This is our time to showcase ourselves, so we will do this with style.

We will be having a "Grand Raffle" at the International event, so ANY prizes would be gratefully received in the Big Marquee. Could I thank in advance Kelham Hall and the many people who have worked endlessly to make this happen.

I also need another favour of you all and that is when speaking with any member of the public regarding battle flags please can we approach this with the greatest sensitivity. I think that is about all of my ramblings.

Y'all take care and "SEE YOU AT KELHAM"

Linz x  
(Company Secretary)

## ACWS at Heckington

If you thought Glastonbury 2016 was bad for appalling weather, limitless mud and confined camping space, try the ACWS at Heckington! The ACWS travelled to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **The Largest Village Show in England** at Heckington,

Lincolnshire on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Despite the appalling weather on the Friday and Saturday nights, this show still attracted crowds of up to 35,000 so it is an extremely prestigious event with bags of entertainment throughout the whole weekend. This show has been going since 1863 which was of course right in the middle of the American Civil War so it is an extremely longstanding and historical show. Due to this, there were some very special attractions over the weekend including the Big Monster Trucks, the JC Balls Digger Dance Display, the Red Devils Parachute Team as well as some prestigious Athletics, Cycling, Show Jumping and Road races. The Saturday night highlight was the Queen II Tribute Band and the Grand Spectacular Fireworks display which were well received by everyone who attended. Nevertheless, and without doubt, the most popular and most used attraction were the numerous tractors placed all over the site as they helped the many cars and vans both on and off the site and get out of the deep mud!

Many ACWS re-enactors arrived on the Friday night and were confronted by a restricted camping area, thick mud on all the roads into the showground as well as appalling wet weather but everyone to their credit buckled down and managed to squeeze in! Camp fires were soon lit and everyone quickly settled down. Fortunately, the weather on the Saturday was excellent and surprisingly everything quickly dried out following the Friday night deluge. The ACWS, based in the Heritage Display area of the Showground, was contracted to perform living history, drill, music and firing displays on both days. On the Saturday, the ACWS managed to start their firing display in front of a large and enthusiastic crowd before being quickly stopped due to the Shire horses nearby quickly becoming skittish! However, both Armies then went on a march around the large showground which was

excellent and really well received by the huge crowd. The ACWS Drum and Fife band also commendably performed additional sessions to ensure the public were entertained. Unfortunately, on the Saturday night, the heavens opened up again and many people woke in the very early hours of the Sunday morning to find their tents flooded. The Confederates particularly suffered as their tents were very close to each other, many were in lower ground dips and channels and the ground was totally saturated. The whole showground was under water but nevertheless the show went on unlike the Y Not Music Festival in Derbyshire which had to be cancelled due to the same weather. Obviously, a few Confederate re-enactors had to leave early due to flooding and the journey to the cars with their sodden gear were many and long as no vehicles could get (or were allowed!) on the showground. However, again the weather improved over the day, and the ACWS were able to perform a much longer firing display which went down really well with the public as well as another excellent session by the ACWS Drum and Fife Band. Much credit must go to all those ACWS re-enactors who stayed.

The ACWS next travel to the M5 Multi Period Event at Spetchley, Worcester on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> August 2017. This is cracking multi period event organised by the Worcester Re-enactors and attended by many re-enactors from around the UK and just gets bigger and better every year.

Stewart (Goober) Douglas

43<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina

## **Did You Know?**

Of the nearly 200,000 African Americans who fought for the North, more than 100,000 were runaway slaves. The number of African Americans who enlisted in the Union Army was larger than the number of soldiers in the entire Confederate Army in the final months of the war. Twenty-five African American soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honour. Approximately 35,000 of the nearly 200,000 died during the war.

# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The American Civil War Society Ltd (a company limited by guarantee, number 2610962) hereby gives NOTICE that it's AGM will be held on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017, starting at 1pm prompt at the White Hart Hotel, 49 Lord Street, Gainsborough, DN21 2DD.

If you are a current member and have any nominations for posts of Directors or Army Commanders of the Society and/or you have any agenda items appropriate for the AGM, then put them in writing as soon as possible addressed to The Secretary ACWS Ltd, PO Box 270, Washington, Tyne and Wear, NE37 9BX. These MUST be received at this location by NO LATER than Monday 2nd October 2017.

Nominations for other than existing post holders have to be signed by the nominee and proposed by at least one other current member, who must also sign the nomination. The nominee may submit a short address for circulation to the membership to support their candidature.

As at the date of this Notice, the current directors are standing for re-election as far as is now known.

The current two Army Commanders are also standing for re-election as at the date of this notice.

Once relevant inputs have been received, the AGM Agenda can be put together and the appropriate documentation sent to you before the AGM.

Please note, only current members of ACWS are entitled to vote at the AGM or to submit proxy forms. Members who wish to attend the meeting are asked to bring their membership cards to the AGM to help validation, admission and/or voting if necessary.

For and on behalf of the Board,

**Linda Reed**

**Company Secretary**

18th August 2017

NB:

Electronic delivery of Agenda and voting slips. We will seek to send all the AGM paperwork to all those of you who have e-mail addresses electronically by that means (to cut down on printing and postages) and post only to those who currently have no e-mail address or who have specifically opted-out of e-voting. PLEASE NOTE, your Webmaster has devised a secure way for you to deliver your Proxy Vote electronically. This will save everybody a lot of time & cost of postages. If you are coming to the AGM, you will NOT be voting electronically (or by post). However, you all need to make sure either Mike Bussey or Claire Morris have your correct, up-to-date e-mail address for this to happen. If you fail to do this then you will not get the AGM papers or proxy vote form, will you? Make sure we have the right information by NO LATER than Friday 29th September 2017.

### **Similarities Between Lincoln and Davis**

Both were born in Kentucky, less than one hundred miles and one year apart. They remain the only presidents born in Kentucky.

Both served during the Black Hawk War (1832).

Both suffered from depression.

Both lost sons before and during their presidencies

Both served in the U.S. Congress.

Neither regarded African Americans as equal to whites.

Neither asked to be nominated as president. Neither man chose his vice-president

Both condemned John Brown's Raid.

Both were political moderates.

Both were accused of wearing dresses.

## **Chairman's Update for International at Kelham Hall.**

Working Parties will be on site from Wednesday if you wish to help please contact myself or Daz Paul.

We also need volunteers that will be available on Friday to help with the school visits.

All period traders will be camped near Cavalry area unless otherwise discussed.

We have many rooms within Kelham Hall we will have a Head Quarters Saturday Union and Sunday Confederate.

We will have a ladies room where ladies can sew, knit, crochet drink tea and cakes or anything you would like to do.

In the Dome room we will have a film on loop all day and display boards to advertise ACWS regiments. So please bring any regimental material that can be displayed.

Also any volunteers that would floaters in there to maintain the displays and entertain the public.

Hopefully we be having a music room where anyone who can play can entertain the public.

Food vendors will be available on site Friday evening 4pm until 8pm.

Also open 8am for breakfasts.

Beer tent will be open Friday evening.



Hoping to have a Victorian Fair Galloper's swing boats.  
Possibly brass band. These are all going to be supplied by  
Kelham

All family campers could you please confirm ASAP as Kelham  
need to check capacity of the area.

Most importantly those who are arriving on Saturday or  
Sunday must provide their names and registration number to  
Caz Davies or at [cazdavies173@yahoo.com](mailto:cazdavies173@yahoo.com) as Kelham have  
stated if you are not on the list you will be charged entrance  
fee the same as members of public.

Could all regimental commanders and regimental members  
that are on this page who know there mess mates that are not  
on Facebook please pass on all this information. Warning  
orders will be dispatched in due course from Val Holt.

Any questions you have regarding this please pm me or email.

Your Chairman  
Tim Davies

### **A Few More Facts.**

The Civil War prison camp Elmira had two observation towers  
constructed for onlookers. Citizens paid 15 cents to look at the  
inmates. Concession stands by the towers sold peanuts, cakes,  
and lemonade while the men inside starved.

Approximately 470,000 soldiers were held prisoner during the Civil  
War, which was more than the population of Arkansas at the time.  
About 56,000 died in prison camps.

If the names of the Civil War dead were organized similar to the  
names on the Vietnam Memorial wall, the Civil War memorial  
would be over 10 times longer.

# **The Postal Service During The Civil War**

Mail has always been very important to soldiers. During the Civil War, as it is today, the arrival of mail was highly anticipated. Those of you who have been in the service can attest to that. Franklin Bailey wrote to his parents in 1861, that, getting a letter from home was more important to him than "getting a gold watch."

Soldiers did not just sit back and wait for their loved ones to write to them. They very actively solicited their friends and family by writing voraciously.

Even after the firing on Fort Sumter the postal service continued to serve those states declaring themselves out of the Union. Southerners continued to use U.S. postage. On June 1, 1861, the postal services separated themselves from one another, the date chosen by the Confederate Post Office Department. By October of 1861, the seceded states still had in their possession, postage valued at over \$200,000. As a result, the design of U. S. postage was changed and stamps, and envelopes were destroyed throughout Northern post offices.

## **The Union**

According to Bell Wiley's "Billy Yank," a civilian worker with the U. S. Sanitary Commission, who visited a number of units in 1861, reported that many regiments sent out an average of 600 letters per day.

About 45,000 pieces of mail per day were sent through Washington D. C. from the eastern theatre of the war, and about double that in the west, through Louisville. Areas with heavy troop concentrations were bogged down with incredible amounts of mail.

A soldier who kept track of his own outgoing mail reported that in 1863 he sent 109 letters to "homefolk," 55 letters to other friends and another 37 letters were written by him for fellows who could not write. He was pleased that he received 85 letters in return.

In order to process the estimated 8 million letters per month, postal reforms were enacted. Prior to the war, the postal service carried a large deficit, mostly due to southern routes. In 1860 alone, mail service in the eleven Confederate states cost about \$2,897,530 while producing receipts of \$938,105, a deficit of nearly 2 million dollars. With secession, unproductive routes were eliminated so that by 1863 the U. S. postal service was actually showing a profit. This profit helped bring about a number of important postal reforms.

On July 1, 1863, free delivery of mail began in the 49 largest cities in the North, cities with over 50,000 in population. Within 3 years the free delivery was extended across the country.

Postal carriers walked about 22 miles per day, seven days per week, and were paid an annual wage of \$670. It cost three cents to send a letter, except to the far west, it cost ten cents. In an 1863 reform, the cost of mailing a letter was standardized to 3 cents anywhere in the country.

In 1864, to speed up the process of delivery, the postal service began to sort the mail while still on the train, cutting about 24 hours off delivery time. While there were often lengthy delays, most CW soldiers received their mail within 2 weeks of it being sent. According to several reports, about 90 % of white Union soldiers were literate and about 80 % of Confederate.

## **The Confederacy**

Shortages of ink, paper, and postage stamps limited the amount of mail sent. The Confederate Post Office Department raised its rate to 5 cents on a half-ounce letter for the first 500 miles with double the rate after 500 miles.

The increase still did not meet the expenses, so on July 1, 1862, the rate was standardized to 10 cents per letter, with newspaper and book rates dependent upon weight.

Service was also reduced to three times per week, instead of daily, but for the soldier it was much more infrequent. One Confederate soldier wrote home, "It is a constant incessant complaint in the army...in regard to not receiving any letters from

home and their friends and relatives not receiving those they write to them. There is quite a defect somewhere not to say gross negligence on the part of someone."

When John G. Reagan took over as Postmaster General of the Confederate Post Office Department in March of 1861, one of his first acts was to send a friend to Washington D. C. in an effort to recruit southern born postal workers to come to work for the Confederacy. He asked these men to bring with them reports, route maps, forms, and anything else they thought could be useful in setting up the Confederate Post Office Department. Reagan's recruiting effort was very effective, and he was even presented with the U. S. Postmaster General's appointment book. Reagan negotiated with the railroads to haul the mail once a day, instead of twice, and at half the rate until the end of the war at which time Reagan promised premium prices.

At the June 1st switch to the Confederate Postal Department, a date chosen by the Confederacy oddly enough, the department found themselves without any postage stamps. For 20 weeks, postmasters were forced to use hand stamps or provisional issues. The first issued Confederate stamp was a 5 cent stamp which bore the likeness of Jefferson Davis.

The supply of Confederate stamps never met the demand. Letters of value or containing money were most often sent via the Southern Express Company.

With the Postal Department in financial trouble, the Confederate Congress established an Express service for government letters travelling over 500 miles. The rate was a flat \$1, but by 1864 the department operated at a profit, due to the extensive use of this \$1 rate. The exchange of money from the Confederate Treasury Department to the Confederate Post Office Department hid the true expense of the service. Now showing a "profit," Confederate soldiers were allowed to send their letters postage due, and newspapers were allowed to be sent to the soldiers on the various fronts for free. Exchange of mail from the Confederate States to the United States was handled by private companies, primarily Adams - Southern Express.

Foreign mail was a problem, getting into the country was difficult

# Sedgefield





# Alamo





# Draycot





# Heckington





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due to the blockade, getting out of the country was problematic because Confederate postage was not recognized by any foreign nation. Ships captains carrying mail arranged to purchase postage at the port of entry.

Postal workers in the Confederacy were paid about \$60 per month. In 1863, in Richmond, postal workers went on strike for higher wages. Reagan promised an increase and the workers went back to work on his promise. With the \$1 express rate the workers were granted an increase.

At the war's end mail service gradually returned to the control of the U. S. Postal Service. Special postal agents were assigned to assist in the restoration of service. By November of 1865, 241 Southern routes were restored. By November of 1866, 3,234 of 8,902 post offices in the South were back under Federal control.

Articles on mail, and the postal systems can be found in both of Bell Wiley's books, "Billy Yank" and "Johnny Reb," as well as in Richard Current's Encyclopaedia of the Confederacy." "The Union, a Guide to Federal Archives Relating to the Civil War," by Munden and Beers, contains not only a road map to finding more in the archives, but a pretty good description of postal reforms and activities of the Postal Department. Beers solo effort on the Confederacy, "The Confederacy, A Guide to the Archives of the Government of the Confederate States of America," provides much information on the Confederate Post Office Department.

### **Civil War Facts**

South Carolina was the first state to secede from the Union on December 20, 1860 The amphibious landing of 110,000 at Iwo Jima cost 5,931 American lives and wounded 17,372 more. Roughly the same numbers and losses were involved in the Civil War battle at Chickamauga. Iwo Jima spanned 36 days. Chickamauga lasted 36 hours (September 19-20, 1863).

Gettysburg was the largest battle ever fought in North America. It's victor, General Meade, was born in Spain.

# KELHAM HALL INTERNATIONAL 2017

10am – 5pm Living History throughout & various displays  
3-4pm Main Battle both days

## ARENA SCHEDULE

### SATURDAY

11am – 11.30am	Artillery Display (US)
11.30am – 12 Noon	Artillery Competition (US & CS)
12 Noon – 12.30pm	Cavalry Display
1pm – 1.30pm	ACWS Fife & Drum Corp
1.30pm – 2pm	Infantry Display (US)
2pm – 2.30pm	Kids Drill (CS)
4pm – 4.30pm	Cavalry Meet & Greet

### SUNDAY

11am -11.30am	Artillery Display (CS)
11.30am – 12 Noon	Kids Drill (CS)
12 Noon – 12.30pm	Cavalry Display
1pm – 1.30pm	ACWS Fife & Drum Corp
1.30pm – 2pm	Infantry Display (CS)
4pm – 4.30pm	Cavalry Meet & Greet

### SATURDAY and SUNDAY

Living History in the House 10:30 – 16:00  
Military Headquarters with sentries posted (Union Saturday,  
Confederate Sunday)  
Ladies in the Music room with period music (times to be  
published) throughout the day  
Historical Interpreters to respond to questions  
Movie – Gods and Generals in the Dome room with displays  
*Subject to change*

## For the Ladies

The Union Ladies had a meeting at Spetchley to discuss ideas for the International at Kelham Hall. One of the things which came up was making sure we looked the part, and we agreed that modern hairstyles should be covered or disguised. One of the ways was to wear 'day caps'. Victorian ladies wore these at home and under their bonnets when outside. One way of hiding the fact that you were having a bad hair day was also solved. These caps could be plain and tied on under the chin and very handy for keeping your hair out of your eyes while doing the laundry or heavy household chores. More decorative caps were adorned with ribbons and lace and held in place with hairpins. Another type of cap is the Sortie Cap. This is a knitted cap. Some of you will have met with my friend and fellow re enactor from the USA at Spetchley, and she kindly gave me a sortie cap, as Kelham is taking place in September and although we hope the weather will be kind to us, there is no guarantee it will be warm. The sortie cap is even easier to make than the day cap, anyone who can hold the knitting needles can make one in a very short time. All you need is wool in two contrasting colours, Aran wool is perfect for your needs, although double knit would probably work too, but more rows would possibly be needed. Use the appropriate knitting needles.

The pattern is as follows:-  
Cast on 71 stitches and knit two rows as a foundation then knit about 8 rows in stocking stitch and change colour and reverse stocking stitch for 8 rows. Continue in this manner until you have knitted 6 stripes of main colour and 5 stripes of contrast colour. Make a fringe if desired, gather the short



ends together and secure and attach ribbons to decorate and tie. What could be simpler than that?

For something a little bit lighter and indoorsie you could try this idea which I have tried and it does work.

You need a narrow hairband (I know it's cheating a bit) a nice



round of net or lace enough to cover your hair when gathered and about a metre and a half of ribbon and some binding a length of either baby ribbon or elastic depending on how much you wish to cheat. Cover your hairband with the binding and attach the net or lace to the binding making sure your hairband will slot through the binding. Gather enough of the broader ribbon to cover the binding and make bows for the sides or use silk flowers for the decoration. Hem the netting allowing for either the baby ribbon or elastic to be slotted through. And secured at the sides. If using ribbon you will need to make accommodation for the ribbon in the centre back. Needless to say I cheated and used elastic.



# Whatever happened to Whistling Dick?

Whistling Dick was a banded and rifled 18 pound Confederate siege and garrison cannon that was originally cast as a Model 1839 smoothbore. It was built at the Tredegar Ironworks in Richmond and was reinforced by bands to stop it exploding when firing. It earned its name Whistling Dick by the peculiar whistling sound made by the huge projectiles fired from the gun. This was put down to the erratic rifling bore that was later made inside the barrel. Whistling Dick was far too heavy for field service but became a vital part of the Confederate defences protecting Vicksburg and the Mississippi River. Due to its size and the skills required to load and fire the weapon, it was surprisingly served throughout the siege of Vicksburg by a Louisiana cavalry unit who became the only artillerymen able to accurately and safely fire the huge weapon. During the siege of Vicksburg, it was famously credited with sinking the Union gunboat, Cincinnati on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1863. In addition, it severely interrupted Union General US Grant's canal digging operations to bypass Vicksburg as not only did it knock out numerous Federal dredging machines but also made all the slaves and Union soldiers working on the canals run for cover at every opportunity whenever the whistling sound approached. Although not always deadly accurate, it had a profound psychological impact on the Union troops and many Union veterans during re-unions after the Civil War recalled being narrowly missed by Whistling Dick whilst cowering in their trenches. So with the surrender of Vicksburg to Union forces on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1863, the Federals were delighted to have captured this famed Confederate artillery piece and it was quickly shipped off and permanently installed at Trophy Point at The United States Military Academy West Point, New York. However, in the ensuing decades, questions about the real identity and authenticity of Whistling Dick begun to be raised and so this is the ongoing story of What happened to Whistling Dick?

The questions about the real identity of Whistling Dick began in 1900 when a Confederate soldier, Alfred Leach, who was one of the former gun crew of the famous cannon, claimed that on the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1863, a day before the surrender of Vicksburg, a detail of 14 Confederate soldiers were ordered to move the cannon from its firing position on Wymans Hill on the Vicksburg defences and take it to the Old Vicksburg waterfront. He states that from there, it was transported onto an old coal barge, paddled into the main channel of the Mississippi River and

dumped overboard. The Confederates were desperate not to let their iconic cannon fall into Union hands on their impending surrender the following day and be later used against them. Finally, in the 1950's, (some 100 years after it's capture) the cannon that was shipped to West Point was closely analysed and discovered not to be Whistling Dick at all but was in fact a similar Confederate cannon called the Widow Blakely. So what really happened to Whistling Dick?

In reality, there are 2 current theories of what may have happened to Whistling Dick. The first is that during 1863 the Mississippi River did in fact flow directly in front of Vicksburg. However, in 1876, a cut off occurred (called the Centennial cut off) isolating the river from Vicksburg itself and forming an oxbow lake, slightly west of Vicksburg. So, even though, Whistling Dick weighed 2.5 tons and the logistics of actually moving it quickly during night would be particularly difficult, a river or former river location is plausible. Secondly, the Confederates may have buried the cannon in a loess cave near her actual location on the defences. It is well recorded that there were numerous deep caves carved out in the vicinity of Wymans Hill during the long siege of Vicksburg. However, there is no documentation or evidence whatsoever to substantiate this latter theory.

So, in essence, neither hypotheses provides an adequate explanation to what has really happened to Whistling Dick and this still remains the case to this very day.

Article by Stewart "Goober" Douglas, 43<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina

Sources: Wikipedia ; Geological Society of America, Session 32 The Disappearance of the Cannon Whistling Dick April 2010: Various Internet Sources.

## **CS ARMY COMMANDERS REPORT**

Hello to ALL my southern army members.

Hopefully by the time you read this the season will be almost over.

What a season it has been!

It started off on a sour note with the exclusion of a member which affected the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina regiment, but I am so glad to see the 2<sup>nd</sup> SC still attending and now growing.

There has been mixed attendances at some events this season, Heckington quagmire and Oulton Park.

The Alamo was a fantastic weekend and was enjoyed by all who attended, it forged new friendships and allies.

I write this at Culzean Castle and we still have Earls Barton and the International at Kelham Hall to come. I know you will have enjoyed yourselves.

The atmosphere around camp has been a joy to watch this year and long may it continue. The Confederate forces have acquitted themselves in a fine, professional manner.

It is with great sadness that Captain Kevin Mitchell has relinquished his 2ic position and returned to the position of Army Adjutant. All of the Confederate forces thank him for his service in this position. Personally Kevin, thank you for your help.

I intend to stand for the post of Army Commander again this next year if elected I will serve you to the best of my ability. The position for 2ic would be available for anyone who feels they can carry out the role. It will be a brevet, trial and must have the blessing of their regiment.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your continued support over the past year, especially your support after the introduction of the new 2<sup>nd</sup> National Confederate flag (thank you Daz – Union Army) and new flag pole which represents colours up – start of the authentic day and colours down – stand down, beer o'clock or home time.

We must continue to adapt to the continuous changes that are happening around us and support the society as much as possible if in your means to do so.

Continue to recruit new members and indeed try to get old members to return.

Let's all improve and not slip back and be battered by the political monster that keeps popping up its head now and again. Damage can be caused in an instant, but growth and trust takes a lot longer.

So let's all "crack on" and enjoy ourselves at weekends.

Keep your powder dry  
Long Live the Confederacy

Your Obedient Servant  
Major Glenn Gibson  
Commanding Officer Confederate Forces ACWS

## The Chunky Creek Train Wreck of 1863

The Chunky Creek Train wreck of 1863 occurred during the American Civil War near the town of Chunky, Mississippi on the Chunky river. It was one of the worst rail disasters during the Civil War and very little is known or even written about it. As such, this is the story of the Chunky Creek Train wreck that cost many Confederate soldier and civilian casualties as the train raced to transport these much needed reinforcements towards the raging Battle of Vicksburg which was going on at the time.

On 19 February 1863, the train called “Mississippi Southern” left Meridian, Mississippi depot at approximately 3.00am in the early morning to transport Confederate troops and a number of civilians to the Battle of Vicksburg. The total number of soldiers and civilians was approximately 100. However, this was winter time and severe flooding at the time had caused debris to start building up at the bridge spanning the Chunky river near the town of Hickory, Newton County, Mississippi. The steadily increasing build up of debris from the flooding eventually caused the bridge to slightly shift leaving it 6 inches out of alignment. Attempts to try and warn the train at the last moment failed and the bridge collapsed as the speeding train crossed over.

The locomotive was totally submerged and all the attached wooden boxcars loaded with soldiers and supplies completely demolished like a string of dominoes. The cargo debris of barrels, boxes and supplies could be seen floating in the cold winter stream. Over 40 Confederate soldiers and several civilians were killed because of the high speed impact but many others were also drowned in the icy waters after being trapped under the wreckage or swept away.

Immediately after the disastrous train wreck, Choctaw Confederate Indians who had only recently been organised a few days earlier led the rescue and recovery efforts. Confederate Major S.G Spann who led The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Choctaw Indians who were based at a Confederate training camp near to the scene of the disaster described the horrific scene. “The engineer was under military orders and his long train of cars was filled with Confederate soldiers who, like the engineer, were animated with but one impulse – to Vicksburg! To Victory or Death! Onward rushed the engineer. All passed over except the hindmost car.



The bridge had swerved out of plumb, and into the raging waters with nearly one hundred soldiers the rear car was precipitated. "Help" was the cry, but there was no help".

Fortunately, it would appear to the contrary that help did in fact come far quicker than expected as many of The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Choctaw Indians rushed to the crash scene from their nearby camp. Led by Confederate private Jack Amos and Elder Williams, many of the Indians immediately stripped to the waist and plunged into the icy cold flooded creek. Their immensely brave and heroic actions resulted in many Confederate soldiers and civilians being rescued.

When daylight came the bodies, cargo and \$80,000 were recovered from the swollen river. The \$80,000 was recovered from the baggage of W.P Grayson who was a Paymaster for the Confederate Government out of New Orleans. He perished in the disaster. Many of the bodies were quickly interred along the railroad right of way. The formal investigation that naturally followed concluded that a winter flood caused a build up of debris which shifted the bridge trestle. It also reported that the day before a train had crossed the bridge but only after all the passengers were removed due to ongoing concerns over the build up of debris caused by earlier flooding. Rail workers had made a futile effort to repair the earlier damage but did not have enough crew or resources to get the work completed before the next train arrived. As a result, an elderly man had been placed in the Chunky hills with a lantern to stop the train and a pole erected 100 feet from the bridge which was the common practice at the time. No-one knows why the Engineer failed to adhere to both these warnings and regardless of every effort the train continued on through the night to its final tragic destination.

On April 28<sup>th</sup> 2003, the Sons of Confederate Veterans placed a wreath at the site of the Chunky Creek Train wreck site in observation of Confederate Memorial Day. As part of the ceremony, all of the names of identified Confederate soldiers and civilians were read out as a mark of respect.

Sources : Wikipedia; Greg Boggan (Feb 6, 2005) – The Chunky Creek Train Wreck of 1863.

Article by Stewart "Goober" Douglas, 43<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina

## **SHARPSBURG**

**(Kelham Hall)**

**When Lee's divided army stepped upon the Maryland shore,  
He hoped to flank the Federals by attacking Baltimore.  
McClellan wired to Lincoln, "Sir I have Lee's battle plan,  
"I'll catch him at South Mountain, and I'll bag his Rebel  
band." Silently they stood in ranks a hundred thousand  
strong. And stared across the corn fields in the early morn-  
ing dawn. The ragged grey clad soldiers faced the men in  
blue again, While star crossed, blood red banners fluttered  
wildly in the wind.**

### **CHORUS**

**So one last kiss to say farewell, Susanna don't you cry.  
Just hold me for a moment now, before we say goodbye.  
I'll carry your sweet image. Your name I'll softly speak.  
If I should fall at Sharpsburg, beside Antietam Creek.**

**Hooker gives the order, and the Iron Brigade steps out.  
Half way through the tall green corn, they hear the Rebels  
shout. Like a lightening scythe the volley lay the Black Hats  
row on row, Like dry leaves in a whirlwind they fall to rise no  
more. Jackson turns to Hood and shouts, "Now send your  
Texans in." And a frightening Rebel banshee howl floats  
above the cannons din. Four times they charge and counter  
charge across the blood soaked field. The Dunker church,  
the gravestones where the Rebs refuse to yield.**

### **(CHORUS)**

**John B Gordon's voice rings out beneath the mid-day sun,  
"We'll hold this line till the sun goes down, or victory is won.  
"Alabamans to the centre, fix your rifles, cap and load.  
"For we must hold the Yankees here upon the sunken road."**

**The Irish men fixed bayonets, green silk colours they  
displayed. They charged in marshal splendour,  
as the drum and fife were played. The silent Maryland  
countryside explodes in smoke and flame. And turns the  
sunken road into a ghastly bloody lane.**

**(CHORUS)**

**Perched high on cliffs above the stream, Toomb's Georgians  
hold the bridge. Blue coats fall with every stride as flames  
pour from the ridge. We'll trade our blood for whiskey, and  
we'll storm the Rebs on high, We'll take the bridge, and plant  
old glory on the other side. With a rush Yanks crossed the  
blood soaked bridge, Then climbed the cliffs beyond.**

**But A P Hill has just arrived, and he's got his red shirt on.  
In new blue coats and flags unfurled the valiant Rebs attack.**

**Their volleys smashed the Highlanders, and drive the  
Zouarves back. Next day the guns stood silent in the cold  
September rain. We'd had enough of killing fields to start  
the thing again. So McClellan stood his bloody ground, and  
claimed that he had won. While Lee knew well this terrible  
war had only just begun.**

**So one last kiss to say farewell, Susanna don't you cry.  
Just hold me for a moment now, before we say goodbye.**

**I'll carry your sweet image. Your name I'll softly speak.**

**If I should fall at Sharpsburg, beside Antietam Creek.**

**I'll carry your sweet image. Your name I'll softly speak.**

**If I should fall at Sharpsburg, beside Antietam Creek.**

Both the war's bloodiest day (Antietam) and its bloodiest battle (Gettysburg) occurred in Union states. More than 5,000 soldiers died at Antietam, making September 17, 1862, the single bloodiest day in U.S. military history.

This beautiful song tells the story of the bloodiest battle in the history of America,



## **EVENTS CALENDAR 2017**

**23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> September 2017**  
**Kelham Hall International**  
**See further details inside**

**October 21<sup>st</sup> EAST KIRBY, LINCS**

**The ACWS has been invited by The Royal British Legion, to take part in their Poppy Appeal Launch at East Kirby Aviation Museum. Address is Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, East Kirkby, Spilsby, Lincs, PE23 4DE**

**This is a one day living history only demonstration, no camping, in and out on the same day. This is a charity event, service groups will also be in attendance.**

### **ACWS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017,**  
**The White Hart Hotel,**  
**49 Lord Street,**  
**Gainsborough,**  
**DN21 2DD.**